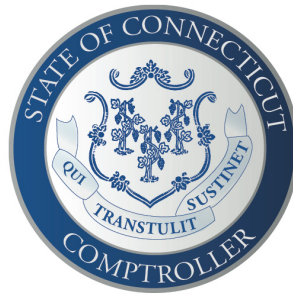


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Written Testimony
Comptroller Kevin Lembo
March 9, 2018

Concerning

**H.B. 5325: AN ACT CONCERNING PRE-KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE TWELVE
EDUCATION FUNDING**

&

S.B. 365: AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FUNDING

Good afternoon, Sen. Osten, Sen. Formica, Rep. Walker, Rep. Ziobron, and Members of the Appropriations Committee.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify on House Bill 5325, An Act Concerning Pre-Kindergarten to Grade Twelve Education Funding, and Senate Bill 365, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education Funding.

The time has come for Connecticut to recognize its values and reprioritize its investments in order to actualize our state's full economic place and potential in New England. As this Committee evaluates our state's investment priorities, I urge you to consider the long-term economic consequences of any funding decisions that put the game of picking winners and losers over early childhood education investments. Investing in early childhood education — as opposed to direct economic assistance handed to individual businesses, such as hedge funds, — is not only the right thing to do for our children, but well-grounded research shows it's far more successful in propelling economic growth.

Early childhood education investments, such as universal preschool, provide — in the long run — more than twice the projected annual impact on state job growth than direct business subsidies, according to decades of research by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. The Institute found that such early childhood interventions, "when run well, appear to initiate a process of skills building that leads to a higher-quality adult labor force, which helps increase wages and employment rates. Therefore, early childhood programs can be seen as 'labor supply side' policies to promote local economic development."¹

¹ <https://www.upjohn.org/research/education/early-childhood>

The ongoing fiscal crisis in Connecticut reinforces the need to make smart, data-driven decisions about how to invest taxpayer dollars. In recent years, state budget constraints have derailed millions of dollars to fund a long-term high-quality preschool plan, even as the state borrowed tens of millions of dollars to deliver incentive packages to the largest hedge fund in the world.

I want to thank you for raising these bills and recognizing the urgent need to reevaluate Connecticut's approach to funding and prioritizing early childhood education.